

Minutes - King County Rural Forest Commission Meeting Thursday, January 16, 2014, Preston Community Center

Commissioners present: Dick Ryon, North Bend resident (Vice Chair); Rex Thompson, forester; Ron P. Baum, forest landowner; Doug McClelland, Washington Department of Natural Resources; Daryl Harper, forest landowner; Sandy Miller, forest landowner; Bernie McKinney, forest landowner; Daryl Harper, forest landowner; Brandy Reed, King Conservation District; Cindy Spiry, Snoqualmie Tribe

Staff: Randy Sandin, Department of Permitting and Environmental Review; Lisa LaBrache, Council staff; and Linda Vane, Commission Liaison

Guests: Beth leDoux, Snoqualmie Watershed Forum Technical Coordinator

Vice Chair Dick Ryon called the meeting to order at 9:40 a.m.

Minutes: Motion 1- 0114 That the minutes of the November 11, 2013 meeting as corrected be approved. The motion passed unanimously.

Election of Officers for 2014

Nate Veranth was elected to the position of Chair and Bernie McKinney to the position of Vice Chair. The at-large Executive Committee members will be Doug McClelland and Rex Thompson. Sandy Miller was selected as the representative to the KCD Advisory Committee.

Staff and Agency Reports and Announcement

Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) – Doug McClelland reported that DNR had adjusted the boundary of the Mt. Si Natural Resource Conservation Area to add a small amount of former commercial timberland. Second, he reported that in the coming months the paving of the county Middle Fork Road would commence. The paving of the road will not affect working forest, he said, but would make the area much more accessible to the public for recreational use. Doug commented that DNR had put considerable effort into providing safe public access to state forestlands.

A discussion of landowner liability related to public access to forestlands followed. Dick Ryon indicated that RCW Chapter 4.24.200 and 4.24.210 provide significant protection from liability for landowners who allow recreational access to their lands. Doug said that the law has worked well for DNR. He commented that it could be a challenge for large landowners who do a lot of manipulation of the landscape and invite recreation, to adequately identify and advertise potential hazards.

Linda Vane, Commission Liaison – First, Linda announced that the annual financial disclosure statements would be distributed soon in a new electronic format. Second, she reported that there was an unfilled position for a representative of non-timber values of forests on the commission. Candidates who represent recreation interests and/or forestry education would have the highest priority according to Linda. She asked the commission for their assistance with outreach. The group made a number of suggestions.

King Conservation District (KCD) Update

Brandy Reed, Senior Program Manager King Conservation District

Brandy reported that the KCD and King County had concluded the Task Force/Conservation Panel process in October. She outlined the series of four policy recommendations and six environmental service priorities that the Task Force and Panel produced. She said that a final report that details the policy and environmental services recommendations would be available on the [KCD website](#).

Brandy said that of the six service priorities, KCD would first focus on designing new services to support urban agriculture and urban forestry and to expand their technical assistance services to serve more small-lot rural forest landowners. In working with small forest landowners, the KCD will focus on properties with 1 to 5 forested acres. The King County Forestry Program works more often with the larger properties, explained Brandy, so there would be no overlap between the two agencies' programs.

Brandy outlined the four policy recommendations and the timetable for implementing them. She said that among these would be a restructured KCD Advisory Committee, which would include representatives of many of the same entities that took part in the Task Force and Conservation Panel. The King County Rural Forest Commission and Agriculture Commission would be included, said Brandy.

Brandy provided an overview of the rates and charges system that is used to determine the annual fee that property owners pay along with their property to support the services provided by the KCD. The current assessment would expire at the end of 2014, she said. In the coming months the KCD would actively engage the public, their partners, and stakeholders in a process of proposing a new system of rates and charges, according to Brandy. She went on to describe the public engagement process and the KCD's timeline for preparing a proposed work plan and a new rates and charges system for submittal to the King County Council by August 1, 2014.

Summary of the Snoqualmie Watershed forestry workgroup: focusing on how to help the forestry industry while protecting for critical hydrological conditions.

Beth leDoux, Snoqualmie Watershed Technical Coordinator

Beth reported on a project that is getting underway in the Snoqualmie River basin. A Snohomish Basin Protection Plan will be developed through a partnership of King County, the Tulalip Tribe, and Snohomish County with funding from an EPA grant. The purpose of the project is to build on the general recommendations of the 2005 Snoqualmie Watershed Forum (WRIA 7) Salmon Conservation Plan, which was developed in response to ESA listings of chinook salmon and other species. The Protection Plan will become an addendum to the 2005 Salmon Conservation Plan, she said.

Beth explained that the Protection Plan would provide specific recommendations for actions to protect hydrology and prevent further environmental degradation, particularly with regard to farms and forests. According to Beth, planners and scientists have come to understand that on a watershed scale the effects of climate change and continuing development pressures could overwhelm the gains made by habitat restoration efforts and threaten the long-term viability of fish populations, farms, and forests.

The Protection Plan would look at WRIA 7 through a "hydrologic lens," understanding that while there are many factors that affect salmon, water must be delivered in the right flows, seasons and temperatures for salmon populations to respond to structural improvements in habitat, Beth said. This means that even though salmon do not travel beyond Snoqualmie Falls, the hydrologic functions of the upper watershed are of critical importance for salmon, for example.

Beth explained the technical approach that would be used to develop the plan. The first steps in the process would be to identify all existing information resources regarding the hydrologic functions of the watershed such as scientific research, basin plans, protection tools such as current use taxation programs, land use, zoning, and perhaps most important – local knowledge, she said.

Beth explained that draft "technical approaches" outlining suites of protection strategies for each of 12 Planning Units in the watershed would be available for review and comment. She invited the members of

the commission to provide comments and recommendations regarding these drafts. She said that a key objective of the protection strategies would be to identify actions that could meet the requirement of protecting important hydrologic functions while maintaining viable timber harvests in the watershed.

There were a number of questions and comments regarding the information in the presentation, which Beth addressed. Beth thanked the commission for their interest and offered to provide further information about the draft technical approaches when they became available and on other opportunities for comment during the process.

Update on soft surface trail permitting in King County

Randy Sandin, Resource Product Line Manager, Department of Development and Environmental Services

Randy Sandin reported on the Department of Permitting and Environmental Review's (DPER) progress toward developing a streamlined permitting process for low impact trails, most of which are on public lands. He said that existing programmatic permits for Washington DNR and King County Parks had served as models for the first such permit for a project on private land. When completed in spring 2014 this programmatic permit for a project on private land could be available as a model for other groups to use. Programmatic permits are useful for organizations such as non-profits that build larger projects and on more than one site, he explained.

Randy said that DPER is also working on streamlining the permitting process for less extensive low impact trail construction projects of the type that a small forest landowner might build. The County is currently updating its [Surface Water Design Manual](#), which may alter the current standards, according to Randy. That may mean that some conditions in current permits will be out of date, he explained. In that case, DPER could look at standards and possibly set up an exemption from permits for certain trail projects.

Randy reported that DPER had also converted all fees to fixed fees. There would be no more hourly fees charged. He commented their new process is pretty efficient right now, with permit fee for trails now running about \$600, which should go down even if cannot work out an exemption.

There was an extensive discussion of permit costs, ideas for trails standards, trail liability issues for private landowners among the commissioners. Randy thanked the group and said that he would keep them apprised of DPER's progress on updating permits for low impact trails.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:40 p.m.

Next meeting

The next meeting will be held on March 13, 2014, at the Preston Community Center.

Staff Liaison: Linda Vane, at 206-477-4842 or linda.vane@kingcounty.gov